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CHAPTER NEWS

December 1980

A CELEBRATION FOR THE HERMITAGE

More than 50 people gathered at Katahdin Iron Works just north of Brownville Junction on October 26th. The day was blustery and much rain had fallen, but the group was not deterred.

The occasion was the dedication of The Hermitage as a National Natural Landmark, one of 11 areas in Maine so recognized by the Department of the Interior.

The Hermitage, a preserve acquired by The Nature Conservancy in 1967, is the site of a stately grove of old growth white pine, well over 100 years old. The old pines grow in a 6-acre portion of the 35-acre preserve, towering 120 feet and more, some as much as 36" in diameter (dbh). Very few stands remain of the extensive pine forests that were so much a part of Maine's early history, particularly in northern Maine. It is also recognized as a Critical Area by the State of Maine.

On hand to make the dedication was Robert W. McKintosh, Jr., Regional Director of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, the branch of the Department of the Interior responsible for administering the Natural Landmark Program. He presented the certificate to Sally C. Rooney, Chairman of the Maine Chapter.

The ceremony was special for another reason as well, as it was also the dedication of The Hermitage as a memorial to Charles P. Bradford. Brad, who contributed so many years of his life in so many ways to The Nature Conservancy, died last spring. His special involvement in the Hermitage led the Maine Chapter trustees to permanently dedicate the preserve to him. A bronze plaque commemorating his work will be placed on the preserve in the spring on the boulder which now holds the landmark plaque.

The group had originally intended to hold the ceremony actually at The Hermitage some 7 miles (on dirt roads) west of Katahdin Iron Works and unveil the landmark plaque. However, the heavy rains had swelled Hay Brook which lies between Katahdin Iron Works and The Hermitage, making the crossing of that stream impossible. Instead, the ceremony was held on the near side of Hay Brook, beside one of its several spectacular waterfalls, reached after a short but strenuous hike. Those who want to see the plaque in its boulder will probably now have to wait till the warmer and drier days of 1981!



(J. Lannon photo)

Maine Chapter Chairman Sally C. Rooney accepts National Natural Landmark Certificate from Robert W. McKintosh, Jr., Regional Director of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. Chapter Director John W. Jensen on right.

The Hermitage itself is intertwined with the history of the Maine woods and the nearby Katahdin Iron Works. It was originally included in a grant from a Massachusetts land agent to Bowdoin College in 1813. Later it was sold to timberland owners. Apparently the first resident was a solitary red-haired Scot named Campbell Young, who built a cabin under the pines in 1892. It was for him that the property was named.

The Iron Works itself was an active industrial site until the early 1920's when better grades of ore were found closer to markets. However, during its height, a hotel at the Iron Works, a railroad spur from Brownville Jct. to Katahdin Iron Works and log drives down the river all brought many people to the area. Other owners built additional cabins which were used by lumbermen and sportsmen.

Although much of this had ceased by the 1940's, the last owner of the cabins, Mrs. Sara Green, "the mayor of Katahdin Iron Works" ran them as hunting cabins until 1967 when she sold the pines to TNC. The lands around The Hermitage and the Gulf are still owned by the forest industry and actively managed for their timber. The cabins were taken down to avoid fire danger to the pines.

(Continued on page 2)

Today the Appalachian Trail passes through the preserve. North, it is only 86 miles to Katahdin. A branch trail to Gulf Hagas, one of the deepest and longest gorges in the state, is reached by walking through The Hermitage. Known as the "Grand Canyon of Maine," Gulf Hagas is also a National Natural Landmark. Katahdin Iron Works itself is now a State Historic Site. More than 1,000 people a year are estimated to pass through The Hermitage.

Many interests were represented at the ceremony, indicative of the numerous groups and organizations associated with the area. These included landowners, Appalachian Trail maintainers, many representatives from the Bureau of Parks and Recreation (who had also worked with Brad when he directed that agency), local town and county representatives, and friends of TNC and the region. Special mention and thanks go to Steve Clark, Stewardship Chairman of the Preserve, who did a lot of the organizing of the event and packed in gallons of much-appreciated cider and donuts for the group. Also on hand was Paul Favour, former TNC trustee, who in his work with the National Landmark Program had recommended The Hermitage as a potential site. Mention, too, should be made of two ladies who joined the group from Dover-Foxcroft who remembered coming to Katahdin Iron Works as children -- and remembered the hermit!

It is hoped that many TNC members will have the opportunity to visit this region in the future and be able to view the magnificent pines which have made it nationally significant.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Gifts have been received
by the Maine Chapter
in memory of
Charles P. Bradford
Rogers M. Doering
Arthur B. Dayton

DIRECTORS



John W. Jensen
Executive Director

In the September issue of the Newsletter, I wrote about our efforts to protect Placentia Island at the mouth of Blue Hill Bay. You will remember that this 500-acre island has been actively used by American bald eagles (for feeding, roosting, and nesting) for at least 60 years.

The owners of Placentia originally gave TNC an option on the Island through October 1, 1980. While many people had made very generous gifts and pledges, we were still a long way from the \$190,000 fund-raising goal set in late summer. As a result, we were unable to exercise our option at that time.

Fortunately the owners agreed to extend the option through December 15, 1980, to give us more time to seek the very necessary funds.

LOSSES TO TNC

Charles Errol Heywood, known to many active in the early days of the Maine Chapter, died last summer in Colebrook, N.H.. Mr. Heywood lived for many years in Upton, Maine, contributing much to the region.

Consistent with his long-time interest in the preservation of unique natural areas, Mr. Heywood was the former president of the Maine Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. In Maine during the 1960's, he helped establish TNC ownership of the Step Falls Preserve on Wight Brook in Newry, Turtle Island in Winter Harbor and other coastal islands, continuing their preservation and public use. He was also involved in protecting the Springvale Rhododendron stand, together with Grafton Notch State Park and Katahdin Iron Works State Historic Site.

He remained interested in the Conservancy until his death. It is hoped that a formal remembrance of his work will be placed on the Step Falls Preserve during 1981.

Another preserve loss came just recently with the death of Miss Elizabeth Hoyt, a donor of the La Verna Preserve. Miss Hoyt, who was over 80, taught economics for many years at the University of Iowa in Ames. She spent her summers in Round Pond, and with her sister Mrs. Anna Mavor donated part of the La Verna Preserve to the Conservancy in 1965 and 1971. This was land which had been bought by their grandfather in 1848. Part of the Preserve also came through her efforts from the La Verna Foundation, a family foundation which had acquired the land for the "conservation of nature and the study of nature."

The Preserve is located on the eastern shore of the Pemaquid Peninsula and protects 3,600' of rugged shoreline. It provides excellent habitat for wildlife, including osprey who nest there.

Miss Hoyt felt deeply about the preservation of land and the responsibility to maintain it. Her booklet "Man and Nature in Bristol" (1965) is a written confirmation of this fact. It closes with: "It is a long time since the first settlers arrived in Bristol in the early sixteen hundreds. They found it a beautiful country, and the beauty remains, entrusted to us."

With this extended option, we have now reached approximately 75 percent of the goal in cash and pledges. As a result, we have decided to exercise our option and purchase Placentia.

We are exercising this option in the hope that the importance and beauty of Placentia will be enough to motivate people to provide that last 25 percent.

This is all the more important because our expenses have turned out to be noticeably more than originally planned. A combination of unexpected title problems (which have been solved), slower than anticipated fund raising, and the terms of the option have resulted in somewhat higher than anticipated expenses. A loan was made earlier this fall to cover many of the front-end expenses associated with these efforts.

The very necessary things such as fund raising and title searches aside, the **important** thing is that we are about to exercise our option on one of the real gems of Maine. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the 150 or so people who have already given so much -- and to those who will help put us "over the top."



So. Bristol Benefits From TNC Action

The Town of South Bristol is the beneficiary of TNC protection activity this month as they prepare to take over ownership of land deeded to them by TNC.

The land was originally donated to TNC in 1977 by Dwight and Mary Tracy of South Bristol and New Mexico. It was their wish that the land at a later date be conveyed to the Town. The 33 acres on the Damariscotta River will be the first publicly owned shorefrontage for this coastal community. Although there are many miles of shoreline on the Bristol peninsula, the Town had no significant land-holding along the coast.

Transfer was delayed so that the Town could apply for Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service funds (Department of Interior) to develop it into a town park. Word has been received that the federal grant has been approved. It is now possible for the transfer to proceed.

Planning for this property has been overseen by a project committee of local citizens headed by Dr. Chester Brown. They sought professional advice from Portland landscape architects Michell-DeWann Associates who have worked out a system of trails and scenic vistas incorporating the outstanding features of the land.

The property is thickly wooded and rises some 100' above the Damariscotta River offering fine views in several

directions. It includes some 800' along the shore.

Of additional interest to Conservancy members is its proximity to TNC's Plummer Point Preserve just north of the Damariscotta River.

Here is another example of where Conservancy is able to encourage the preservation of land in other ways than outright ownership. Indeed, much of the 1.8 million acres preserved nationally through the efforts of TNC has been transferred to public agencies; expanding our national parks, forests and wildlife refuges, or on a local level, helping a community to acquire open land. This is a role that Conservancy could utilize to the benefit of many communities here in Maine. Hopefully, the example of South Bristol will encourage others to explore this with the Maine Chapter.



**Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year**



A VAUGHNS ISLAND SUMMER

Sample of letters received from 4-H groups who used Vaughn's Island Preserve this summer under the auspices of the Cooperative Extension Service. They participated in specially permitted no-trace camping experiences and marine education programs.



Dear Nature Conservancy
Thank-you for staying on
Vaughn's Island for 3.5 days. I liked
it a lot.
Jon M

Thank you for letting us use
Vaughn's Island it was fun looking
in the tide pools

DEAR NATURE CONSERVANCY,
Thank you for letting us stay
on Vaughn's Island. We really had fun!
We traded to eat snails and they
were really good! I think your Island
is nice. I liked camping on it. So
thanks again for letting us use the
Island.



STEWARDSHIP

PRESERVE NEWS



INDIAN POINT – Blagden, Bar Harbor:

Over 3,000 persons came to walk on the trails of this Preserve last summer and see the seals offshore. Greeted by caretaker Stan Hamblen and his wife as they register, most visitors easily come away sharing their infectious enthusiasm and concern for the area. It's worth a visit to the Preserve (and to meet them) if you are on the Indian Point side of Bar Harbor.

MILL CREEK – Falmouth:

Efforts continue through the persistence of the Conservation Commission to protect all the wetlands of this creek nestled between Route 1 and Route 88.

THE HERMITAGE – T7R10:

A special committee of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club has been set up to work with TNC on the future management of The Hermitage and the region as a whole.

NEW PRESERVES?

Yes, but details are not yet final. Look for news about them in the February News.

STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOP

Saturday, April 11, 1981, has been set as the date for a workshop especially designed to help Stewardship Committee volunteers. Mark this date on your calendar now so you'll be sure to keep the day free. It is hoped that as many Committee members as possible will be able to attend.

THANK YOU

Every year I continue to be impressed with the hours of time and effort given to the care and management of the Preserves by the volunteer Stewardship Committees. These are the people who make Conservancy "work" and without whom Conservancy could not exist. In Maine we are fortunate to have so many dedicated people. With 62 Preserves spread hither and yon, it would be impossible to care for them without people in the area who take an active interest in the land. Sometimes I think we do not adequately recognize this contribution; it is easy to get caught up in the excitement of the acquisition of a new area, yet in the long term it is the people who help us manage the Preserves who ensure that the goal of protection of that parcel is achieved.

As the year draws to a close, it seems an appropriate time to recognize this effort and to thank all the Stewardship Committee volunteers for all their help in 1980. Working on a day to day basis with people who care so for the land makes the task of protecting the land immeasurably easier and more rewarding, and I thank you.

Minie Lannon
Stewardship Director

St. John Visitors

Those of you who subscribe to "Yankee Magazine" will have found some familiar faces in the November issue. Executive Director, John Jensen, joined a group last summer exploring the rare plant regions of the St. John River in northern Maine. Leading the trip was Dr. Charles Richards, a botanist at the University of Maine at Orono, who re-discovered the Furbish lousewort along the banks of that river. The group also included Richard Dyer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hank Tyler and Sue Gawler of the Maine Critical Areas Program, Sally Rooney, Chairman of the Maine Chapter, Candy McKellar, Co-chairman of the Crystal Bog Stewardship Committee, and Eleanor Hall, also a botanist (and a member of the Great Wass Stewardship Committee). The purpose of the trip was to provide all with a better understanding of this complex region which is the habitat for so many rare species.

CONSIDER A GIFT TOO!



- ☐ YES, I want to preserve Maine's unique Natural Heritage.
- ☐ Please enroll me as a member of The Nature Conservancy.
- ☐ \$10 Subscribing ☐ \$100 ACORN
- ☐ \$15 Family ☐ \$1,000 Life

Enclosed is my extra contribution of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

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